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MR. BELMONT'S MISTAKES.

AUGUST BELMONT.

Less than two years ago Mr. August Belmont was hailed as a public benefactor. He had come forward and relieved the city from an intolerable transit condition. He had made money and stood to make much more. No one begrudged his good fortune. When he put out a claim for the proposed subway extensions and said he had a moral right to the privileges as against Ryan public sentiment agreed with him, because with the appeal came the implied promise that he would not join with Ryan or be a party to his practices.

Mr. Belmont has now become all that Ryan ever was and worse. He has broken his promises to the community. He has banded with Ryan and is attempting to sneak out of his obligations. He is understood to be grieved at the popular outbreak against him. Like most rich men who owe their wealth to the use of other people's money he is now showing contempt for them. Not only is he doing this, but he is going further. He is trying through one of his confidence men, Maurice M. Minton, to control the next Democratic State Convention.

The worst addlepate in the Hearst aggregation is not half as much a promoter of disorder, socialism, public ownership and the other isms as is this insensate Wall Street magnate, who thinks he can substitute dollars for honor and drive the Democratic party as if it were a horse on one of his own race tracks.

THE MANHATTAN BRIDGE FARCE.

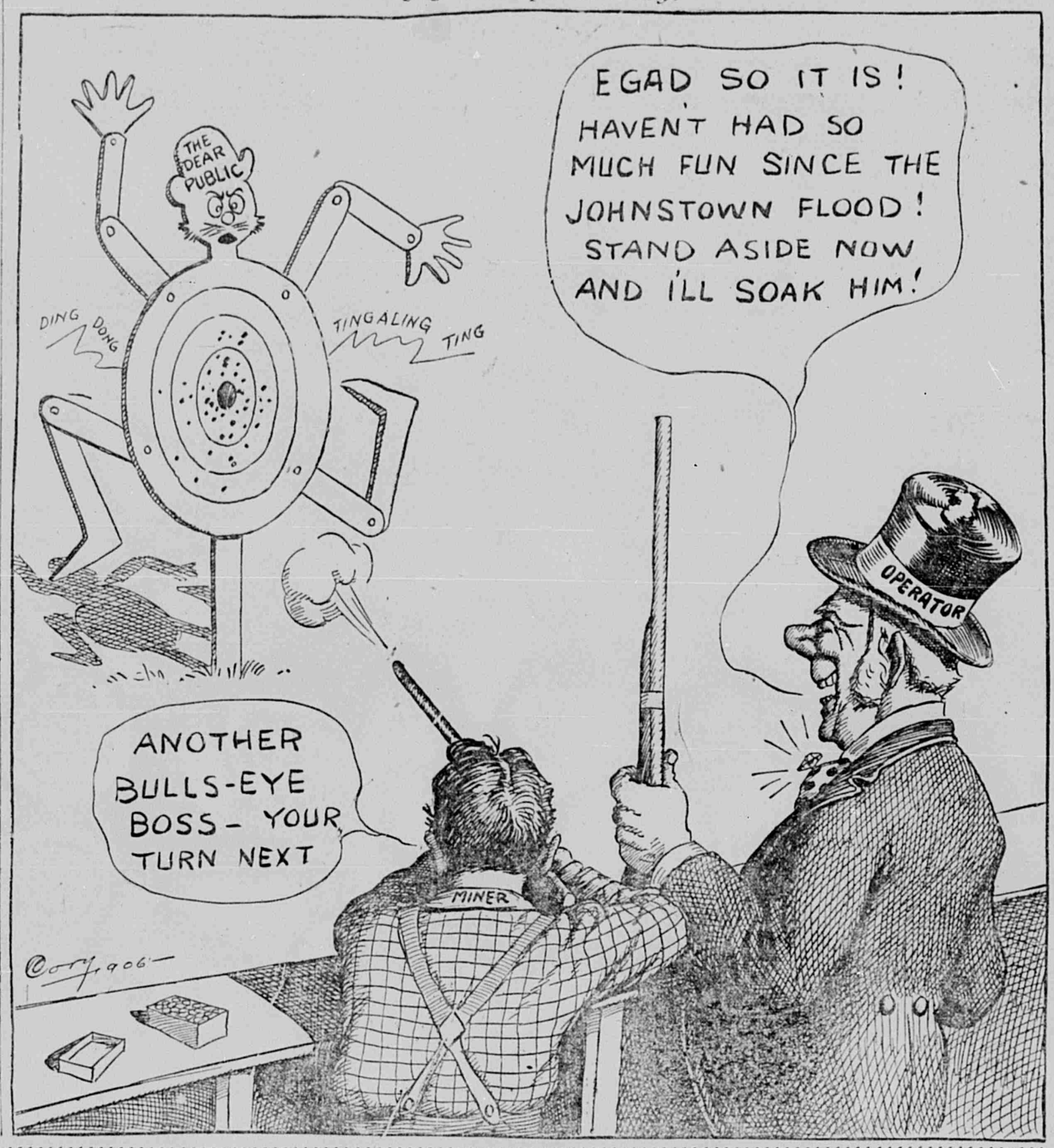
How long is the serial story of delay, incompetence, extravagance and litigation in the matter of the Manhattan Bridge to continue? The fact that Commissioner Stevenson and the Assistant Corporation Counsel had to hurry to Mineola by special train to defeat another hold-up trick illustrates the desperate nature of the obstructive tactics employed to impede this necessary public work.

It is now six years since the city got ready to build the bridge. It was four years ago last March that the great caisson for the Brooklyn foundation was towed down the East River. The net progress to date is represented by the two stone piers on which the towers are to rest. Disappointed land speculators and aggrieved taxpayers have taken their cases into court to delay construction. The steel companies whose extravagant bids were subsequently thrown out have made use of every legal obstacle. The threshing over of the question of eye-bars and wire cables occasioned a further setback. The new ideas of new Commissioners have retarded progress. The result is a bridge barely begun where it should be finished. It is hardly possible that it can be completed under the most favorable conditions before 1910.

Meantime Budapest has planned and put up a bridge that is a model of modern methods of construction. But Budapest has had no political organizations to placate or whims of official inexperience to carry out.

No 'Fun for the Target.

By J. Campbell Cory.



Why the United States Is What It Is To-Day.

FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS IN A SERIES OF THUMBNAIL SKETCHES.

What They Did;
Why They Did It;
What Came Of It.

By Albert Payson Terhune.

No. 19.—The Declaration of Independence.

"WHEN I took command of the army," wrote George Washington to a friend early in 1776, "I abhorred the idea of independence. But now I am fully convinced that nothing else will save us."

The whole country said, in effect, the same thing. We are apt to look on the early deeds of the patriots as a part of a struggle to shake off England's yoke and to form an independent nation. This is a great mistake. Nothing of the sort was intended.

When British oppression became too heavy to be borne the colonists protested. When the protests were ignored the colonists sought to enforce their rights by armed resistance. That was all. Washington took the field to make England give the colonists their full rights as British subjects, not to break away from the motherland. If the patriots' requests had been granted by England, the War of the Revolution might have been delayed for years and might never have occurred.

But King George's Ministry, pig-headed and blind as ever, retaliated by proclaiming the patriots common rebels; thus casting them off from British allegiance. The colonies, disowned by the parent country, had no resource left except to combine and form a nation for themselves.

The Rebellion Becomes a Revolution.

So Congress went into permanent session at Philadelphia to decide on the best course to pursue. On June 7, 1776, while the members still hung back, each dreading to say the word that should brand the speaker as an especial object of royal vengeance, Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, arose and offered a resolution to the effect that the colonies were absolved from further allegiance to Great Britain and should therefore form a federation of independent States.

This resolution fell like a thunderbolt upon the hesitating session. It was bitterly opposed; many delegates preached the possibilities of reconciliation, and the resolution was finally "tabled" until July 2. However, Lee so far carried the day as to secure the appointment of a committee of four to draw up at once for Congress's consideration a document that should voice the general tone of Lee's resolution. The youngest member of the committee was chosen by his fellows to draft the paper. He was Thomas Jefferson, a farmer lawyer of Virginia, only thirty-three years old, but noted for eloquence, logic and literary talents. Accordingly, on July 2, this document, known henceforth as the Declaration of Independence, was complete and was read to Congress. Lee's resolution was formally adopted on that day, but the Declaration itself remained under discussion two days longer.

An amusing, trivial incident hastened its final adoption. Near the assembly room was a stable from which issued swarms of flies. The delegates wore knee breeches and thin silk stockings. On these stockings the flies settled, biting through the flimsy material and causing the wearers infinite discomfort. We have Benjamin Franklin's authority for the statement that this annoyance greatly hastened the delegates in coming to a decision.

On July 4, 1776, the Declaration was formally adopted and was signed by John Hancock, President of Congress. The other delegates did not sign the document until Aug. 9. But long before the latter date it had been read from one end of the country to the other. The irrevocable step had been taken. The colonies stood committed to a war to the death. There could be no drawing back now. The Rebellion had, in a day, become a Revolution.

Wave of Defeat Follows Declaration.

The patriots, up to this time, had met with almost unbroken success. On March 17, 1776, they had driven the English from Boston. They had also won victories in Northern New York and in Virginia. But, as if by a decree of fate, an ebb tide seemed to set in almost directly on the signing of the Declaration. Defeat and disaster to the colonies followed close on each other's heels during the next six months; nor could all Washington's genius, for the time, stem the flood of misfortune.

As for the signers themselves, some rose to high positions in the new nation, even to the Presidency itself. Others, as in the case of Chief Justice Richard Stockton, of New Jersey, suffered veritable martyrdom for the holy cause.

To England, the news of the Declaration came as a thunderclap. The colonies, whom King George had sought to frighten into submission by the ban of "rebel," had accepted the term and were defying their former tyrant. Each man who signed the Declaration of Independence knew well that in case of failure he was signing his own death warrant.

"Well," observed one nervous delegate, as he affixed his signature, "I suppose we must all hang together."

"We must," grimly agreed Franklin, "or else we will all hang separately."

The Helmet of Navarre by Bertha Runkle

Author of "THE TRUTH ABOUT TOLNA."

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Felix Broux is page to Count Etienne de Mar, estranged son of the Duke of St. Quentin, a powerful French noble. The period is 1593, when Henry of Navarre, claimant of the French throne, is besieging Paris. The city is held by the League, under the Duke of Mayenne. St. Quentin is a follower of Henry, but has boldly come to Paris. Mayenne's nephew, Paul de Lorraine, tries to make Mar assassinate St. Quentin. Mar and Paul both love Lorance de Montluc, Mayenne's ward. Etienne rescues St. Quentin from a gang of Mayenne's men, and father and son are reconciled. During the fight St. Quentin has been robbed of important papers affecting the King's prospects. Etienne and Felix trace the theft to Peyrot, a low adventurer. They go to Peyrot's rooms and try to recover the documents.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Chevalier of the Tournelles.

(Continued.)

"ONE moment, monsieur." The nose of the pistol pointed around to me. "Go over there to the door, you."

I retreated, covered by the shining muzzle, to a spot that pleased him.

"Now are we more comfortable," Peyrot observed, pulling a chair over against the wall and seating him, the pistol on his knee. "Monsieur was saying?"

Monsieur crossed his legs, as if of all seats in the world he liked his present one the best. He had brought none of the airs of the noble into this business, realizing shrewdly that they would but hamper him as lace ruffles hamper a duellist. Peyrot, treeless adventurer, living by his sharp sword and sharp wits, reverenced a count no more than a hod-carrier. His occasional mocking deference was more insulting than outright rudeness; but M. Etienne bore it unruffled. Possibly he schooled himself so to hear it, but I think rather that he felt so easily secure on the height of his gentlehood that Peyrot's impudence merely tickled him.

"I was wondering," he answered pleasantly, "how long you have dwelt in this town and I not known it. You are from Guienne, methinks."

"Carcassonne way," the other said indifferently. Then memory bringing a deep twinkle to his eye he added: "What think you, monsieur? I was left a week-old babe on the monastery step; was reared up in holiness within its sacred walls; chorister at ten, novice at eighteen, full-fledged friar, fasting and singing misereres, exhorting dying saints and living sinners at twenty."

"A very pretty brotherhood, you for sample."

"Nay, I am one. Else I might have stayed. But one night I took leg bail, lived in the woods till my hair grew and struck out for Paris. And never regretted it, neither."

He leaned his head back, his eyes fixed contemplatively on the ceiling, and burst into song, in voice as melodious as a lark's:

Piety and Grace and Gloom,
For such like guests I have no room!
Piety and Gloom and Grace,
I bang my door 'gainst your face!
Gloom and Grace and Piety,
I set my dog on such as ye!

Finishing his stave he continued to beat time with his heel on the floor and to gaze upon the ceiling. But I think we could not have twitched a finger without his noting it. M. Etienne rose and leaned across the table toward him.

"M. Peyrot has made his fortune in Paris? Monsieur rolls in wealth, of course?"

Peyrot shrugged his shoulders, his eyes leaving the ceiling and making a mocking pilgrimage of the room, resting finally on his own rusty clothing.

"Do I look it?" he answered.

"Oh," said M. Etienne slowly, as one who digests an entirely new idea, "I supposed monsieur must be as rich as a Lombard, he is so cold on the subject of turning an honest penny."

Peyrot's roving eye condescended to meet his visitor's.

"Say on," he permitted lazily.

"I offer twenty pistoles for a packet, seal unbroken, taken at dawn from the person of M. de St. Quentin's squire."

"Now you are talking sensibly," the scamp said, as if M. Etienne had been the shuffler. "That is a fair offer and demands a fair answer. Moreover, such zeal as you display deserves success. I will look about a bit this morning among my friends and see if I can get wind of your packet. I will meet you at dinner time at the inn of the Bonne Femme."

"Dinner time is far hence. You forget, M. Peyrot, that you are risen earlier than usual. I will go out and sit on the stair for five minutes while you consult your friends."

Peyrot grinned cheerfully.

"M. de Mar doesn't seem able to get it through his head that I know nothing whatever of this affair."

"No, I certainly don't get that through my head."

Peyrot regarded him with an air ill-used yet compassionate, such as he might in his monkish days have employed toward one who could not be convinced, for instance, of the efficacy of prayer.

"M. de Mar," quoth he plaintively, in pity half for himself so misunderstood, half for his interlocutor so wilfully blind, "I do solemnly assure you, once and for all, that I know nothing of this affair of yours. Till you so asserted I had no knowledge that monsieur, your honored father, had been set on, and deeply am I pained to hear it. These be evil days when such things can happen. As for your packet, I learn of it only through your word, having no more to do with this deplorable business than a babe unborn."

I declare I was almost shaken, almost thought we had wronged him. But M. Etienne gauged him otherwise.

"Your words please me," he began.

"The contemplation of virtue," the rascal droned with down-drawn lips in pulpit tone, "is always uplifting to the spirit."

"You have boasted," M. Etienne went on, "that your side was up and mine down. Did you not reflect that soon my side may be up and yours down you would hardly be at such pains to deny that you ever bared blade against the Duke of St. Quentin."

"I have made my declaration in the presence of two witnesses, far too honorable to falsify, that I know nothing of the attack on the duke," Peyrot repeated with apparent satisfaction. "But of course it is possible that by scouring Paris I might get on the scent of your packet. Twenty pistoles, though. That is not much."

M. Etienne stood silent, drumming tattoos on the table, not pleased with the turn of the matter, not seeing how to better it. Had we been sure of our suspicions we would have charged him, pistol or no pistol, trusting that our quickness would prevent his shooting, or that the powder would miss fire, or that the ball would fly wide, or that we should be hit in no vital part; trusting, in short, that God was with us and would in some fashion save us. But we could not be sure that the packet was with Peyrot. What we had heard him lock in the chest might have been these very pistols that he had afterward taken out again. Three men had fled from M. de Mirabeau's alley; we had no means of knowing whether this Peyrot were he who ran as we came up, he whom I had encountered or he who had engaged M. Etienne. And did we know, that would not tell us which of the three had stabbed and plundered Huguet. Peyrot might have the packet or he might know who had it, or he might be in honest ignorance of its existence. If he had it, it were a crying shame to pay out honest money for what we might take by force; to buy your own goods from a thief were a sin. But supposing he had it not? If we could seize upon him, disarm him, bind him, threaten him, beat him, rack him, would he—granted he knew—reveal its whereabouts? Writ large in his face was every manner of roguery, but not one iota of cowardice. He might very well hold us baffled, hour on hour, while the papers went to Mayenne. Even should he tell we had the business to begin again from the very beginning, with some other knave mayhap worse than this.

"I Shall Live Like a King!"

Plainly the game was in Peyrot's hands; we could play only to his lead.

"If you will put the packet into my hands, seal unbroken, this day at 11, I engage to meet you with twenty pistoles," M. Etienne said.

"Twenty pistoles were a fair price for the packet. But monsieur forgets the wear and tear on my conscience incurred for him. I must be reimbursed for that."

"Conscience, quotha!"

"Certainly, monsieur. I am in my way as honest a man as you in yours. I have never been false to the hand that fed me. If, therefore, I divert to you a certain packet which of right goes elsewhere, my sin must be made worth my while. My conscience will sting me sorely, but with the aid of a glass and a lass I may contrive to forget the pain.

Merit, my love, and Folly dear,
Baggages, you're welcome here!

I fix the injury to my conscience at thirty pistoles, M. le Comte. Fifty in all will bring the packet to your hand."

It had been a pleasure to M. le Comte to fling a tankard in the fellow's face. But the steadfast determination to win the papers for monsieur and possibly respect for Peyrot's weapon withheld him.

"Very well, then. In the cabaret of the Bonne Femme at 11. You may do as you like about appearing; I shall be there with my fifty pistoles."

"What guarantee have I that you will deal fairly with me?"

"The word of a St. Quentin."

"Sufficient, of course."

The scamp rose with a bow.

"Well, I have not the word of a gentleman to offer you, but I give you the opinion of Jean Peyrot, sometime Father Ambrosius, that he and the packet will be there. This has been a delightful call, monsieur, and I am loath to let you go. But it is time I was free to look for that packet."

M. Etienne's eyes went over to the chest.

"I wish you all success in your arduous search."

"It is like to be, in truth, a long and weary search," Peyrot sighed. "My ignorance of the perpetrators of the outrage makes my task difficult indeed. But rest assured, monsieur, that I shall question every man in Paris if need be. I shall leave no stone unturned."

M. Etienne still pensively regarded the chest.

"If you leave no key unturned 'twill be more to the purpose."

"You appear yet to nurse the belief that I have the packet. But as a matter of fact, monsieur, I have not."

I studied his grave face, and could not for the life of me make out whether he were lying. M. Etienne said merely:

"Come, Felix."

"You'll drink a glass before you go?" Peyrot cried hospitably, running to fill a goblet muddy with his last pouring. But M. Etienne drew back.

"Well, I don't blame you. I wouldn't drink it myself if I were a count," Peyrot said, setting the draught to his own lips. "After this noon I shall drink it no more all summer. I shall live like a king.

Kiss me, Folly; hug me, Mirth;
Life without you's nothing worth!

Monsieur, can I lend you a hat?"

I had already opened the door and was holding it for my master to pass, when Peyrot picked up from the floor and held out to him a battered and dirty toque, with its draggled feather hanging forlornly over the side. Chafed as he was, M. Etienne could not deny a laugh to the rascal's impudence.

"I cannot rob monsieur," he said.

"M. le Comte need have no scruple. I shall buy me better out of his fifty pistoles."

But M. Etienne was out in the passage, I following, banging the door after me. We went down the stair in time to Peyrot's lusty carrolling:

Mirth I'll keep, though riches fly,
While Folly's sure to linger by!

"Think you we'll get the packet?" I asked.

"Aye. I think he wants his fifty pistoles. Mordieu! it's galling to let this dog set the terms."

"Monsieur," I cried, "perhaps he'll not stir out at once. I'll run home for Vigo and his men, and we'll make the rascal disgorge."

"Now are you more zealous than honest, boy."

I was silent, abashed, and he added:

"I had not been afraid to try conclusions with him, pistols or not, were I sure that he had the packet. I believe he has, yet there is the chance that, after all, in this one particular he speaks truth. I cannot take any chances; I must get those papers for monsieur."

"Yes, we could not have done otherwise, M. Etienne. But, monsieur, will you dare go to this inn? M. le Comte is a man in jeopardy; he may not keep rendezvous of the enemy's choosing."

"I might not keep one of Lucas's choosing. Though," he added with a smile, "natheless, I think I should. But it is not likely this fellow knows of the warrant against me. Paris is a big place; news does not travel all over town as quickly as at St. Quentin. I think friend Peyrot has more to gain by playing fair than playing false, and appointing the cabaret of the Bonne Femme has a very open, pleasing sound. Did he mean to brain me he would scarce have set that place."

"It was not Peyrot alone I meant. But monsieur is so well known. In the streets or at the dinner hour some one may see you who knows Mayenne is after you."

"Oh, of that I must take my chance," he made answer, no whit troubled by the warning. "I go home now for the ransom, and I will e'en be at the pains to doff this gear for something darker."

"Monsieur," I pleaded, "why not stay at home to get your dues of sleep? Vigo will bring the gold; he and I will put the matter through."

"I ask not your advice," he cried haughtily; then with instant softening: "Nay, this is my affair, Felix. I have taken it upon myself to recover monsieur his papers. I must carry it through myself to the very omega."

I said no more, partly because, in spite of the strange word, I understood how he felt.

"Perhaps you should go home and sleep," he suggested tenderly.

"Nay," cried I. "I had a cat nap in the lane; I'm game to see it through."

"Then," he commanded, "you may stay hereabouts and watch that door. For I have some curiosity to know whether he will need to fare forth after the treasure. If he do as I guess he will spend the next hours as you counsel me, making up arrears of sleep, and you'll not see him till a quarter or so before 11. But whenever he comes out follow him. Keep your safe distance and dog him if you can."

"And if I lose him?"

"Come back home. Station yourself now where he won't notice you. That arch there should serve."

We had been standing at the street corner, sheltered by a balcony over our heads from the view of Peyrot's window.

"Monsieur," I said, "I do wish you would bring Vigo back with you."

"Felix," he laughed, "you are the worst courtier I ever saw."

I crossed the street as he told me, glancing up at the third story of the house of the Gilded Shears. No watcher was visible. From the archway, which was entrance to a court of tall houses, I could well command Peyrot's door, myself in deep shadow. M. Etienne nodded to me and walked off whistling.

I would fain have occupied myself as we guessed the knave Peyrot to be doing, and shut mine aching eyes in sleep. But I was sternly determined to be faithful to my trust, and though for my greater comfort—cold enough comfort it was—I sat me down on the paving stones, yet I kept my eyelids propped open, my eyes on Peyrot's door. I was helped in carrying out my virtuous resolve by the fact that the court was populous and my carcass in the entrance much in the way of the busy passers-by, so that full half of them swore at me and the half of that kicked me. The hard part was that I could not fight them because of keeping my eyes on Peyrot's door.

(To Be Continued.)

"The Masquerader," by Katherine Cecil Thurston, author of "The Gambler," will follow "The Helmet of Navarre," on May 21, in The Evening World.